

Message Text

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DEPT PASS NASA FOR FRUTKIN, CODE I, PARIS FOR NASA
REPRESENTATIVE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TSPA, GW

SUBJECT: SPACE TRANSPORTATION - CRITICAL NEWSPAPER
ARTICLE ON SHUTTLE PROGRAM

1. SUMMARY: THE (WEEKLY) SCIENCE SUPPLEMENT OF
FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG OF JUNE 30 CARRIES A
CRITICAL ARTICLE BY K. RUDZINSKI ABOUT THE SPACE
SHUTTLE PROGRAM, ENTITLED "THE ILLUSION OF CHEAP
SPACE FLIGHT". END SUMMARY

2. BASED ON FIGURES DISCUSSED BY NASA REPRESENTATIVES
AT TWO RECENT SYMPOSIA IN PARIS AND BONN, THE AUTHOR
POINTS OUT THAT THE ORIGINAL NASA COST ESTIMATE FOR THE
SPACE SHUTTLE ORBITER OF ONE-TENTH OF THAT FOR DIS-
POSABLE LAUNCHERS HAS IN THE MEANTIME INCREASED TO ABOUT
HALF OF THESE COSTS, UNDER THE MOST FAVORABLE CONDITIONS
OR, MORE LIKELY, TO THE SAME COST LEVEL AS THAT OF THE
NON-REUSABLE ROCKET SYSTEM. WHILE NASA HAD ORIGINALLY
ESTIMATED A COST OF DM 25 MILLION PER SPACE MISSION,
THIS MUST NOW BE EXPECTED TO BE AS HIGH AS DM 100 MILLION.
THE COST EXPLOSION IS EXPLAINED BY THE DOLLAR DEVALUATION
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AND RISING PERSONNEL COSTS, BUT ONE MUST ALSO TAKE INTO

ACCOUNT THE CHANGE FROM THE ORIGINAL DESIGN.

3. RUDZINSKI ALSO POINTS OUT THAT THE SHUTTLE SYSTEM IS GREATLY ENDANGERED BY THE SOVIET RAPID-SATELLITE-KILLER SYSTEM (REFERENCE AVIATION WEEK JUNE 21) WHICH ENABLES THE SOVIET UNION TO DESTROY A SPACE BODY IN LESS THAN 90 MINUTES FROM STARTING TIME. FOR THE SPACE SHUTTLE SYSTEM THIS WOULD MEAN THAT THE LOSS OF ONE SHUTTLE ONLY WOULD DESTROY ONE-THIRD OF ALL U.S. LAUNCHER CAPACITY, IF THE UNITED STATES DISCONTINUES ALL OTHER LAUNCHERS BY 1982.

4. RUDZINSKI MENTIONS THE CHEAP OTRAG ROCKET DEVELOPED IN THE FRG BY LUTZ KAYSER AND A STUDY PREPARED BY DR. J. SCHULTE-HILLEN OF COLOGNE ON THIS SUBJECT. HE CRITIZES THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR ITS LACK OF IMAGINATION WITH REGARD TO THE GREAT ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF A FUTURE COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE MARKET, STRESSES THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT AVAILABILITY OF US LAUNCHER ROCKETS FOR ALL OF THESE SATELLITES, AND THE LACK OF US AFFIRMATION IN THIS REGARD, AND COMES TO THE CONCLUSION THAT AN INDEPENDENT LAUNCHER CAPACITY IS NECESSARY -- BEST ESTABLISHED ON THE BASIS OF THE CHEAP CONVENTIONAL OTRAG ROCKET.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT: A COPY OF THE SCHULTE-HILLEN STUDY WILL BE FORWARDED ASAP. RUDZINSKI, ALTHOUGH GENERALLY WELL REGARDED HERE, HAS OFTEN CRITICIZED GERMAN SCIENCE POLICIES IN HIS REPORTING. WE CALL ATTENTION TO THE ABOVE ARTICLE BY CABLE PRIMARILY BECAUSE SOME OF OUR CONTACTS SEEM ALARMED ABOUT ITS

POSSIBLE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON US-EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN SPACE. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT FORESEE SUCH AN IMPACT, FROM A RELATIVELY TECHNICAL BACKPAGE STORY, US ASTRONAUT GIBSON WAS QUESTIONED ABOUT IT DURING A TALK HE GAVE IN BONN ON JULY 1.
HILLENBRAND

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